

# The Antiquities in the Hippodrome of Constantinople

SARAH GUBERTI BASSETT

From its foundation in the fourth century throughout the Middle Ages, the city of Constantinople boasted a collection of ancient statuary that was unsurpassed in any of the great medieval cities of the East or the West. The collection, which was amassed by Constantine and his successors through Justinian, must have numbered in the hundreds. It included images of pagan gods, mythical heroes, historical figures, and non-representational monuments such as honorific columns, tripods, and obelisks, most of which were works of pre-fourth-century manufacture. These monuments were set up throughout the city: great public thoroughfares such as the Mese, the open spaces of the Augusteion and the Forum of Constantine, public buildings such as the Baths of Zeuxippos, and the private and semi-private spaces of palaces were all adorned with antiquities.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This article derives from my dissertation, *Paene Omnium Urbium Nuditate: The Reuse of Antiquities in Constantinople, Fourth through Sixth Centuries* (Bryn Mawr College, 1985). Several of the ideas discussed here were first presented at the 1983 Byzantine Studies Conference, Durham, N.C.

Prior studies of antiquities in Constantinople include C. Mango, "Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder," *DOP* 17 (1963), 55–75; R. M. Dawkins, "Antique Statuary in Medieval Constantinople," *Folklore* 35 (1924), 209–48; G. C. Heyne, "Priscae Artis Operae quae Constantinopoli Exstistisse Memorantur," *Commentationes Societatis Regiae Scientiarum Gottingensis* 9 (1790–91), 3–38.

Material for retrieval of the collection is plentiful. The main literary evidence for the Hippodrome may be found in the 8th-century *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (= *Par.*) and its 10th-century derivative, the *Patria Konstantinopoleos* II (= *Patria* II). See Th. Preger, *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanum* (Leipzig, 1902–7), and Averil Cameron and J. Herrin, *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: The Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (Leiden, 1984). Also useful are epigrams from the *Greek Anthology* (= *GA*) (London, 1916) and Nicetas Choniates' 13th-century text, *De signis Constantinopolis* (= *De sig.*), in *Nicetae Choniatae Historiae*, ed. J. L. van Dieten (Berlin, 1975), 647–55. Isolated references in works by historians and poets help to complete the record. The most important of these references are Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vita Constantini* (= *VC*), III.54; Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I.16; and Zosimus, *Historia Nova* (= *HN*), II.31. Other texts are collected in J. Overbeck, *Die antiken*

Among the most splendid of the individual groupings formed during this undertaking was the gathering of antiquities in the Hippodrome. Here monuments stood on bases and honorific columns at the circus entrance, along the *euripus*, in the *cavea*, and above the *carceres*. In this setting, famous works such as a Herakles by Lysippos, the Roman wolf with Romulus and Remus, and the Serpent Column of the Plataean tripod stood side by side with lesser-known representations of gods, emperors, and heroes. The Hippodrome was thus a locus for all kinds of monuments, famous and obscure, whose form embodied ideas appropriate to the circus as an institution and to Constantinople as a city.

The Hippodrome of fourth-century Constantinople was an inheritance from the Severan era of the city's history. Although it may have been in use from the late second century on, it was finished only in the fourth.<sup>2</sup> When Constantine chose the

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*Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der bildenden Kunst bei den Griechen* (Leipzig, 1868) and F. W. Unger, *Quellen der byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte* (Vienna, 1978).

Archaeological evidence is less plentiful. For excavation reports see S. Casson, *Preliminary Report upon the Excavations Carried Out in and near the Hippodrome of Constantinople in 1927* (London, 1928); *Second Report upon the Excavations Carried Out in and near the Hippodrome of Constantinople in 1928* (London, 1929); and idem, "Les fouilles de l'Hippodrome de Constantinople," *GBA* (April 1930), 213–42.

Graphic evidence is either late Byzantine or Turkish in date. Among the most useful visual records are Onofrio Panvinio's depiction of the circus in *De ludis circensibus* (Venice, 1600) and sketches from the notebook of an anonymous 16th-century traveler recording reliefs of the Hippodrome on the lost Column of Arcadius. See E. H. Freshfield, "Notes on a Vellum Album Containing Some Original Sketches of Public Buildings and Monuments Drawn by a German Artist Who Visited Constantinople in 1574," *Archaeologia* 62 (1922), 81–104.

<sup>2</sup>For a general outline of the circus' history, see W. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen, 1977), 64–71. On the Severan and Constantinian circus, see R. Guiland, "Les Hippodromes de Byzance. L'Hippodrome de Sévère et l'Hippodrome de Constantin le Grand," *BSI* 31 (1970), 182–88.

site of Byzantium for his new capital, he enlarged and completed the building by extending the *cavea* and adding the *sphendone*. Architecturally there was nothing exceptional about this course. The Hippodrome followed the standard circus form, which stemmed ultimately from that of the Circus Maximus in Rome. Characteristic features included the U-shape with starting gates (*carceres*) at one end and a central barrier (*euripus* or *spina*)<sup>3</sup> that bisected the track along its central axis.

In addition to completing the Hippodrome's structure, Constantine initiated the first systematic ornamentation of the site.<sup>4</sup> This project appears to have been incomplete at his death, and the decoration of the arena was carried on by subsequent emperors, among them Constantius, Theodosius I, Arcadius, and Theodosius II.<sup>5</sup> While other areas of the city were dowered with antiquities as late as the Justinianic period,<sup>6</sup> there is no record of any post-fifth-century donation in the Hippodrome. It should be noted, however, that the collection of antiquities was supplemented continuously by the addition of contemporary works representing members of the imperial household and circus competitors.<sup>7</sup>

The collection amassed by the Constantinian and Theodosian houses stood largely undisturbed until the thirteenth century. Although fires and riots swept the Hippodrome on various occasions, damage to the monuments seems to have been slight, as such catastrophes were generally confined to the areas in which statuary was not displayed.<sup>8</sup> It was only in 1204, in the city's sack by the

army of the Fourth Crusade, that the Hippodrome collection was destroyed.<sup>9</sup>

The collection lost in 1204 is documented by archaeological, literary, and graphic evidence.<sup>10</sup> The location of the Hippodrome has never been lost, and three of its fourth-century monuments, two of which are examples of re-use, remain in situ: the Serpent Column, the Theodosian Obelisk, and the Built Obelisk. These three monuments represent but a fraction of the circus' original wealth. While excavation has uncovered little of the original decoration, the lost splendor of the site is attested by literary and graphic evidence. Sources document at least twenty-five antiquities, most of which were figural sculpture. Apart from the two obelisks, the Serpent Column, and a set of votive tripods, this statuary depicted athletes, gods, and animals. The general arrangement and display of these monuments is suggested by Onofrio Panvinio's 1600 engraving of the ruined circus (Fig. 1), which shows a wealth of empty statue bases running along the central barrier. Sources indicate that there was also statuary above the *carceres*, at the entrances, and in the *cavea*.<sup>11</sup> This disposition of monuments conformed to what was essentially the standard manner of display in Roman circuses.<sup>12</sup>

The antiquities displayed in the Hippodrome may be classed in four groups: apotropaia, victory monuments, public figures, and images of Rome. There is also a cluster of monuments that resist identification and explanation.<sup>13</sup>

Of the various monuments, the apotropaia are the easiest to interpret. Included in the ranks of these statues were pagan deities such as Artemis<sup>14</sup> and Zeus,<sup>15</sup> wild animals such as lions and hyenas,

<sup>3</sup>Both terms are valid, although the Romans and the Byzantines appear to have preferred *euripus*. See J. Humphrey, *Roman Circuses* (Leiden, 1984), 175–76; M. Vickers, "The Hippodrome at Thessaloniki," *JRS* 62 (1972), 30; C. Mango, "L'Euripe de l'Hippodrome de Constantinople," *REB* 7 (1949), 180–93.

<sup>4</sup>Eusebius, *VC*, III.54.

<sup>5</sup>Theodosius is responsible for the dedication of the Egyptian obelisk and a quadriga group above the *carceres*. For the obelisk see Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*, 65. The quadriga is mentioned in *Par.* 84 (*Patria* II, 75). Arcadius is credited with the erection of a statue in *Par.* 62. No text specifies the contributions of Theodosius II; however, *Par.* 64 describes a debate on the meaning of circus statuary donated by the emperor and his wife. See Cameron and Herrin, *Constantinople*, 144–47 and 253–59.

<sup>6</sup>Justinian's donation of two horses from the Ephesian sanctuary of Artemis at the Chalke Gate is the last recorded gift. See *Patria* II, 75.

<sup>7</sup>For statues of emperors and competitors, see *GA*, XV.41–50 and XVI.335–87. The most famous of the Hippodrome charioteers was Porphyrius. See Alan Cameron, *Porphyrius the Charioteer* (Oxford, 1973).

<sup>8</sup>See A. M. Schneider, "Brande im Konstantinopel," *BZ* 41 (1941), 382–403.

<sup>9</sup>For an account of the destruction, see Nicetas, *De sig.*, 647–55. See also A. Cutler, "The *De Signis* of Nicetas Choniates, a Reappraisal," *AJA* 72 (1968), 113–18.

<sup>10</sup>See above, note 1.

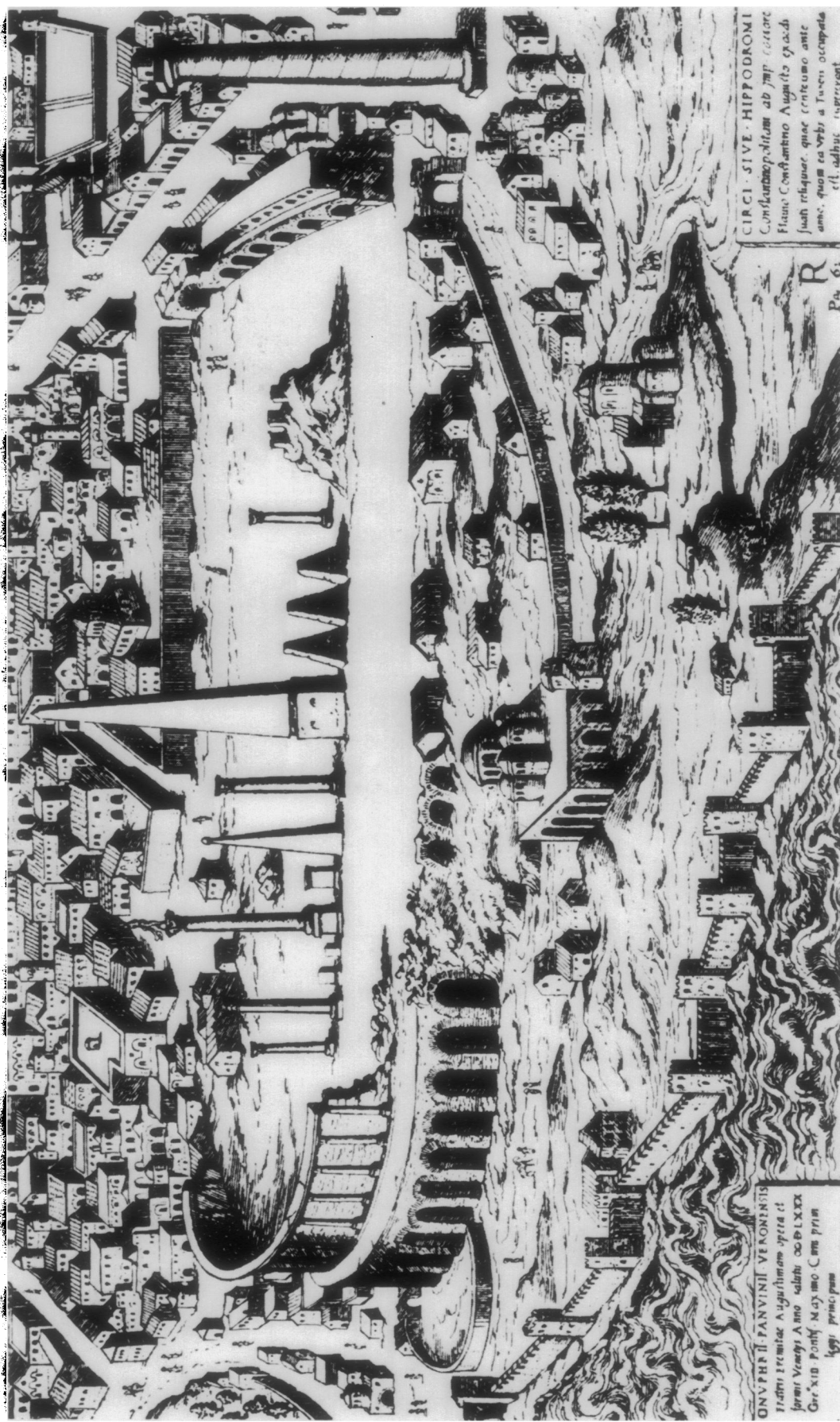
<sup>11</sup>*Par.* 5 and 84.

<sup>12</sup>For comparative material on circuses, see Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 40, 176–254, 372, and 474–75. The most plentiful evidence for sculptural display comes from the Circus of Maxentius on the Via Appia. The *euripus* was excavated in 1825 and again in 1960. See A. Nibby, *Del circo volgarmente detto di Caracalla* (Rome, 1825), and idem, *Roma nell'anno MDCCCXXXVIII*, I, *Roma antica* (Rome, 1838), 632–44; and, more recently, G. Pisani Sartorio and R. Calza, *La Villa di Massenzia sulla Via Appia. Il Palazzo. Le Opere d'Arte* (Rome, 1976).

<sup>13</sup>While most of the monuments in the circus do fall into these categories, a few resist easy categorization or identification. These works include a horse (Nicetas, *De sig.*, 651; *GA*, III.267 and IX.777); Helen of Troy (Nicetas, 652–53); and a curious figure described elliptically as a woman, a horse, and a rider (Nicetas, 653).

<sup>14</sup>See *Par.* 79 (*Patria* II, 74).

<sup>15</sup>See *Par.* 83.



1 Constantinople, the Hippodrome, from Onofrio Panvinio, *De ludis circensibus* (Venice, 1600)

and fantastic creatures such as dragons and sphinxes.<sup>16</sup> These monuments functioned either as representations of patron gods or as talismans to ward off evil. Artemis and Zeus found their way into the circus because of their ancient association with horses and their breeders. As an extension of her dominion over agriculture, Artemis was known as a patroness of horses and their riders.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Zeus was given the epithet "hippias."<sup>18</sup>

While statues of gods and goddesses were understood as patrons of racers and the races, images of wild animals such as the hyena and mythical creatures such as the sphinx were employed for their more general apotropaic value. Such creatures were believed to be evil in and of themselves. Captured and harnessed in a civilized setting such as the Hippodrome, their own nefarious powers were turned loose against the very forces which had spawned them.<sup>19</sup> Thus the hyena, notorious as a trickster and killer of men, was actually turned into a force for good as its own dark powers were channeled into keeping other evil spirits at bay. In this sense the apotropaia were the most useful and practical objects to adorn the course, for by purging the circus of evil they kept the track and its personnel in good running order.

Of the antiquities brought to the Hippodrome, images of victory were by far the most common. Within this general category, some monuments may be viewed as generic victory dedications, others as commemorative of military triumphs, and still others as exemplars for Hippodrome competitors.

Works classified as generic dedications are those that embody the general concept of victory without referring to any particular person or event. Monuments of this type included quadrigae<sup>20</sup> and

a group of tripods.<sup>21</sup> The quadrigae, which stood above the *carceres* and in the *neolaion*, were ancient symbols of victory. Typically, such monuments were dedicated in sanctuaries or placed atop triumphal arches.<sup>22</sup> While these dedications would have had associations with specific people and events, the same probably was not true of the Hippodrome quadrigae. It is likely that these monuments' particular identity was lost when they were removed to the circus. The transformation of at least one of the chariot groups from a specific to a generic monument is suggested by its placement over the *carceres*. In this position it would have stood high above the track without base or inscription, a monument not to a particular person or event, but rather to the horses and drivers ready to spring from the gates below in search of their own, fresh victory.

The second group of generic monuments was a collection of bronze tripods from the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. Traditionally, tripods were used as awards and votive dedications in athletic and dramatic competitions.<sup>23</sup> The common practice was to dower the victor, whether athlete or poet, with a tripod which he, in turn, could offer to the god. At their initial dedication, then, these monuments had specific associations; however, on their removal to Constantinople these associations were lost, and the tripods, like the quadrigae, were transformed into anonymous symbols that evoked the idea of victory through genre alone.

In addition to these generic dedications, there were also monuments associated with specific military conquests. Works understood in this manner included a statue of an ass with its keeper<sup>24</sup> and the Serpent Column of the Plataean Tripod.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>16</sup>For lions see Robert de Clari, *La conquête de Constantinople*, XC in *Historiens et chroniques du Moyen Âge*, ed. A. Pauphilet (Paris, 1952), 61–62. For the hyena see *Par.* 62 (*Patria* II, 79). *Par.* 62 also describes dragons, and Nicetas, *De sig.*, 650 mentions sphinxes.

<sup>17</sup>*RE*, II.1, cols. 1344 and 1346. It may be that the horses and the Helen of Troy (see above, note 13) functioned in conjunction with the Artemis statue. Helen was allied with Artemis in certain contexts. See *RE*, II.1, col. 1357.

<sup>18</sup>See *RE*, ser. 2, XIX, col. 317.

<sup>19</sup>Numerous ancient sources attest the evil powers of the hyena, among them Aelian, *De nat. an.*, VI.14 and VII.22. See also O. Keller, *Tiere des klassischen Alterthums* (Innsbruck, 1887) 156–57 and idem, *Die Antike Tierwelt* (Leipzig, 1909), II, 89–90.

<sup>20</sup>*Par.* 84 (*Patria* II, 75) and Nicetas Choniates (*De Manuele Commeno*, ed. van Dieten, III, 119) describe a bronze group above the *carceres*. *Par.* 5 and 38 (*Patria* II, 87 and 42) record another group in the *neolaion*. Traditionally, the *carceres* group has been associated with the horses astride the portico of San

Marco, Venice. While it is known that the Venetian group was brought from Constantinople in 1204, this association is hasty. No documentation indicates a Hippodrome provenance, and there were other quadrigae in the city. See L. Borelli Vlad and A. Guidi Toniato, "The Origins and Documentary Sources of the Horses of San Marco," *The Horses of San Marco* (Venice, 1977/79), 127–36.

<sup>21</sup>Eusebius, Socrates, and Zosimus (above, note 1) and *Patria* II, 79 all report tripods from the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. Eusebius and Socrates refer to the dedications in the plural, but the total number is not known. The context of the *Patria* indicates that at least one stood on the *euripus*.

<sup>22</sup>*RE*, ser. 2, XIII, cols. 474–76; H. Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, II (London, 1930), pl. 81; and A. Alföldi, "Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells," *RM* 49 (1934), 1–118.

<sup>23</sup>*RE*, V.2, cols. 1669–96.

<sup>24</sup>Nicetas, *De sig.*, 650.

<sup>25</sup>Eusebius, *VC*, III.54.

In its original setting at Nikopolis in Epirus, the Ass and Keeper commemorated Octavian's victory over Mark Antony at nearby Actium. The curious subject matter is explained by Suetonius,<sup>26</sup> who reports that Octavian, having set out on the battle's eve to spy on the enemy, saw a man with a donkey approaching him. When asked to identify himself and his business, the traveler introduced himself as Eutyches (Prosper) and his donkey as Nikon (Victory), and then explained that both were traveling to the victor's, that is, Octavian's, camp. Although Suetonius does not say as much, the encounter must have been interpreted as a favorable omen, at least in retrospect. Accordingly, when the battle was won, Octavian, then Augustus, immortalized the travelers in a shrine at newly founded Nikopolis. Presumably the statue stood in situ until its removal to Constantinople in the fourth century.

The second monument associated with military triumph was the Serpent Column.<sup>27</sup> This monument is one of the few to survive in Istanbul. Its shaft stands on its original location, while its only preserved head, originally one of three, is housed in the nearby archaeological museum. Originally part of the support for a large tripod that stood in the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, the Serpent Column was dedicated by the Greek allies to commemorate their victory over the Persians in the 479 B.C. battle of Plataea. As Pausanias<sup>28</sup> reports, the actual tripod, which was made of gold, was carried off in 355 B.C. by a band of marauding Phocians. This left the entwined bronze snakes as the commemorative monument, and it was this curious object that late antique viewers understood as the emblem for the Plataean victory.

The third group of victory monuments included images of demigods, heroes, and mythical crea-

tures which served as exemplars for competitors in the circus races. Included under this rubric were statues of the Dioscuri,<sup>29</sup> Herakles,<sup>30</sup> Scylla,<sup>31</sup> and an eagle.<sup>32</sup>

By the fourth century, the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux, had long been associated with the circus and its games. Castor was known as a horse tamer, Pollux as a pugilist, and both were counted as charioteers. In their capacity as athletes, the twins were considered overseers of the games. Pindar<sup>33</sup> described how Herakles, having been assumed to Olympus, passed the mantle of the games along to Castor and Pollux, while Horace<sup>34</sup> notes that it was through justice and steadfastness of purpose that the twins attained such glory. The Dioscuri also were viewed as exemplars for those aspiring to circus victories in that they provided a model of strength and virtuous behavior for those who would themselves be victorious in the races.

A similarly exemplary figure is that of Herakles. At least two statues and probably three stood in the circus. One showed the hero struggling with the Nemean lion, the other portrayed him seated and resting after the cleaning of the Augean stables. The former was a popular type of unknown authorship from the series of the Labors, the latter, also from the Labors, a work by Lysippos of Sikyon. Made by the Greek sculptor in the fourth century B.C., the statue, which was a colossal bronze, stood on the acropolis at Tarentum until 209 B.C. when the city fell to Rome and the Herakles was taken off as a spoil. It was then dedicated on the Capitol, where it stood until its removal to Constantinople in the early part of the fourth century.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Zosimus, *HN*, II.31.

<sup>30</sup> Nicetas, *De sig.*, 650, refers to a "man fighting with a lion." This is certainly a reference to Herakles and the Nemean lion. *Par.* 37, Constantine Manasses, *Ekphrasis* I.21–32, and Nicetas, *De sig.*, 649–50 and 519, refer to a second statue of Herakles. This is the statue by Lysippos. Nicetas mistakenly refers to Lysimachos.

<sup>31</sup> See *GA*, XI.270, 271 and IX.755; *Patria* II, 77; Nicetas, *De sig.*, 650–51. For graphic evidence see Freshfield, "Notes on a Vellum Album" (above, note 1).

<sup>32</sup> Nicetas, *De sig.*, 651.

<sup>33</sup> *Olymp.* III.36.

<sup>34</sup> *Carm.* III.iii.

<sup>35</sup> For the Herakles in Tarentum, see Strabo, *Geog.*, VI.3. Plutarch, *Fabius Maximus*, XXII.6, describes the removal to Rome. For Lysippos see F. R. Johnson, *Lysippos* (Durham, N.C., 1927).

According to *Par.* 37, a statue of Herakles was brought to Constantinople from Rome in the consulship of Julian. Six dates are possible. In 322 Amnius Anicius Julianus was consul in the West. Shortly after the foundation ceremonies, in 325, Julius (Ionius) Julianus was consul for the East and West. During the 350s and 360s, Julian the Apostate held the consulship on four separate occasions: as Caesar in 356, 357, and 360, and

<sup>26</sup> Augustus, 96.

<sup>27</sup> For excavation report see Casson, *Preliminary Report*, 12–14. Pertinent literary sources include Herodotus, IX.81, Pausanias, X.13.9, and Russian travelers to Constantinople in G. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington, D.C., 1984), 144, 164, and 184. The column is of bronze and stands to a height of 5.35 m. It is made up of three snakes that twist around one another, separating into three outward spreading branches at the top. Originally, each branch terminated in a serpent's head, but in 1700 all three were cut off. See V. J. Menage, "The Serpent Column in Ottoman Sources," *AnatSt* 14 (1964), 169–73. One head survives in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum. See P. Devambez, *Grandes bronzes du Musée de Stamboul* (Paris, 1937), 9–12. Eusebius, *op. cit.*, states that the monument was brought by Constantine, and the fact that the column stands on the foundation level of the circus supports this statement.

<sup>28</sup> Pausanias, X.13.9.

The third Herakles statue is identifiable from a group described problematically as "Adam and Eve, Eutheria and Limos."<sup>36</sup> It is likely that these figures were antiquities whose original identity has been lost.<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately the text offers no description. It is possible, however, that the group originally was one of Herakles with the Hesperides. Roman sarcophagi with depictions of the Labors often show Herakles complete with apple, tree, and serpent. Occasionally, one or more of the daughters are present. This composition served as a model for Adam and Eve on Christian sarcophagi, and it is possible that it was understood similarly in the later Middle Ages when the author of the *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* described it.<sup>38</sup> The identification would certainly be consistent with the presence of other Labors in the circus.

Even though these statues were originally placed in different settings, their use in the Hippodrome was perfectly appropriate. Herakles was known for his successful completion of the twelve Labors. His accomplishment of these feats made him the model for male strength, and, not surprisingly, he was frequently associated with physical culture. Among the Greeks he was proclaimed patron of athletic contests, and the same association was maintained well into late Antiquity by the Romans, who linked him even more specifically with the circus.<sup>39</sup>

as Augustus in 363. See R. S. Bagnall and Alan Cameron, *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Atlanta, Ga., 1987), 178, 246–49, 254–55, and 260–61. A conservative dating for the importation is, therefore, 322–363; however, 325 seems most plausible. The 322 date may be rejected as it precedes the foundation of the city by two years, and given the pagan stance of Julian, it is unlikely that the statue would have been removed from Rome during his consulship.

Nicetas, *De sig.*, 649–50, reports that the statue was knocked down, but apparently it remained in the circus as it was seen there by Pierre Gilles. See *De topographia Constantinopoleos et de illius antiquitatibus* (Lyons, 1561), 89–91. It is not known when the statue was destroyed.

<sup>36</sup> *Par.* 5 (*Patria* II, 87).

<sup>37</sup> Mango, "Antique Statuary," 63.

<sup>38</sup> See C. Robert, *Die antiken Sarkophag-reliefs* (Berlin, 1897), III, 1, pl. 30, no. 106, pl. 32, no. 116, pl. 33, no. 120. I am indebted to an anonymous reader of this article for this suggestion.

<sup>39</sup> Pliny, *NH*, XXIV.57, reports that there was a temple of Herakles by the Circus Maximus, and Ovid, *Fasti*, VI.209, notes that Herakles was denoted *magnus custos* at the Circus Flaminius. This association between the hero and the circus was maintained into late Antiquity. Fifth-century contorniates from the reign of Anthemius Procopius show Herakles on the *verso* framed by the legend "Herakles Hyppodromos." See A. Alföldi, "Zu den römischen Reiterscheiben," *Germania* 30 (1952), 187–90.

Understood in the popularity of Herakles as a monument for the circus was a moral strength which complimented his physical prowess. To accomplish his Labors, the hero not only required muscle power, but also fortitude and wits. In this respect he was the perfect *exemplum virtutis* for the Hippodrome competitor. For the contestant, the race through the circus was analogous to the accomplishment of a Labor. It required the strength, wits, and fortitude of a Herakles to defy the odds, sustain the effort, and gain victory.

A monument in a similar spirit was the statue of Scylla on the *euripus*. Scylla was often associated with struggle and combat. In her traditional setting across the straits from Charybdis, she posed a constant menace to travelers, their lives, and their fortunes. Those heroes such as Herakles, Odysseus, and Aeneas who traversed the straits with their lives intact represented those who struggled against and conquered death and destruction. They were victors over the ancient forces of darkness and evil, and as such they gained immortal fame. In the setting of the Hippodrome, these iconographical associations were important for two reasons. The presence of the Scylla first called to mind the heroes of the past, and their heroism and glory could be understood as somehow transferable to the athletic heroes of the present. The race through the circus was analogous to the passage through the straits.

A fourth statue was the image of an eagle struggling with a snake. Throughout the Roman period the eagle functioned as an emblem of imperial power, a symbol of apotheosis, and an image of victory.<sup>40</sup> The particular image of the eagle battling with the snake was a common symbol of struggle and triumph in which the eagle was associated with good, the snake with evil.<sup>41</sup> In the specific context of the circus, such an image would have commented on the valor and goodness of the triumphant competitor. Because the Hippodrome was also a locus for imperial ceremony, this statue would also have referred to the emperor.

In addition to apotropaia and victory monuments, the Hippodrome housed images of public figures. These monuments included overtly imperial images of the emperors Augustus<sup>42</sup> and Diocletian<sup>43</sup> and a probable representation of the

<sup>40</sup> See J. Engemann, "Ein Missorium des Anastasius," *Festschrift für Klaus Wessel*, ed. M. Restle (Munich, 1988), 103–15.

<sup>41</sup> For example, Ovid, *Met.*, IV.712–52.

<sup>42</sup> *Par.* 60 (*Patria* II, 73).

<sup>43</sup> *Par.* 76 (*Patria* II, 73).



dictator Julius Caesar.<sup>44</sup> As well, there was a statue of the Mytilenean civic hero, Theophanes.<sup>45</sup>

Images of Julius Caesar, Augustus, and Diocletian represented men who had ruled Rome from Republic to Empire and Tetrarchy, and their presence may have been intended to achieve for the Hippodrome what the re-use of the Trajanic, Hadrianic, and Antonine reliefs accomplished for the Arch of Constantine. In the Roman arch a sequence of images of sound rulers from the halcyon days of the empire's past evoked at once the memory of a Golden Age and, by means of comparison, the idea of its resurgence in the present under the enlightened rule of Constantine, who appears both as the inheritor of tradition and the catalyst for renewal.<sup>46</sup> In the Hippodrome this different but equally important group of Roman rulers would have functioned similarly by inviting comparison between the great rulers of the past and their modern counterparts.

A fourth public figure was that of Theophanes of Mytilene. Theophanes was a friend and advisor of Pompey the Great. During his lifetime and throughout the Roman period, he was lionized by the Mytileneans, to whom he was a symbol of their reintegration into the Roman orbit in the aftermath of the Mithridatic wars. The statue was, therefore, a monument to civic identity. Once removed to Constantinople it retained that meaning, commemorating by its presence the Roman embrace of Greek Mytilene.

To understand the statue's capacity to bear such meaning, it is necessary to consider the traditions associated with sculptural displacement and re-use. In the Roman world the general phenomenon of re-use had its origins in the traditions of military conquest.<sup>47</sup> Originally the wealth of a conquered

nation was transported to the capital where it was presented to the public as part of a triumph. In the earliest triumphs, booty consisted largely of arms, armor, precious metals, livestock, and slaves. With time, the definition of plunder expanded to include works of art, and it was often the case that objects taken as booty were put on permanent public display.

The intention behind the capture and display of these goods, or *spolia*, was complex. At its most basic level, plunder, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral in nature, was a matter of finance. Goods taken in the wake of conquest had monetary value which enriched the state.

As an adjunct to their financial value, however, *spolia* had the potential for enormous symbolic import.<sup>48</sup> To begin with, spoils explained the riches of a conquered nation better than any possible description, thereby offering proof that a campaign had been worth the undertaking. Even more important, however, was the very act of possession: ownership demonstrated dominion. The control of financial resources meant, of course, absolute regulatory power over public life. In the case of works of art, the more ephemeral issues of civic pride and cultural identity were often at stake. This was the case, for example, with the Lysippan Herakles. From the moment of its creation, the colossal bronze was synonymous with Tarentum, becoming both the focus and the emblem of the city's pride. Its removal to Rome in the aftermath of the city's conquest was, therefore, no idle act of plunder. Fabius Maximus, the general in charge of the campaign, must have been aware that the transport of the beloved Herakles to Rome would cap the city's sense of humiliation and degradation. It was tantamount to dragging the city away in chains. Conversely, at Rome, the display of the Herakles would have proclaimed the reality of Roman expansion and the force of her dominion.

In the case of the Theophanes statue, the violent overtones of conquest suggested by the removal of the statue from Mytilene to Constantinople probably would have been muted. It is quite possible that the statue was donated by the Mytileneans themselves,<sup>49</sup> in which case the figure would have given testimony not to the city's loss of liberty, but

<sup>44</sup>*Patria* II, 81. This text is very corrupt, but its description of Julius Caesar falls in the middle of a sequence of descriptions of circus statuary, thus leading me to conclude that it refers to a statue.

<sup>45</sup>The statue is known from an inscribed base in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum. See L. Robert, "Théophraste de Mytilène à Constantinople," *CRAI* (1969), 42–64. The base is circular and bears an inscription honoring Theophanes. The use of Aeolic dialect makes it clear that the base and its statue would have been brought from Lesbos. Robert (p. 57) believes that the statue was sent to Constantinople by the Mytileneans when Constantine began collecting statuary for the capital. This theory is interesting because it suggests that cities were asked to choose representative works.

<sup>46</sup>See P. Peirce, "The Arch of Constantine: Propaganda and Ideology in Late-Roman Art," *Art History* 12.4 (1989), 387–418, and J. Ruyschaert, "Unità e significato dell'Arco di Costantino," *Studi Romani* 11.1 (Jan.–Feb. 1963), 1–12.

<sup>47</sup>For a discussion of these traditions, see M. Pape, *Griechische Kunstwerke als Kriegsbeute und ihre öffentliche Aufstellung in Rom*,

dissertation (University of Hamburg, 1975). Also useful is H. Blank, *Wiederverwendung alter Statuen als Ehrendenkmäler* (Rome, 1984).

<sup>48</sup>See B. Brenk, "Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne: Aesthetics versus Ideology," *DOP* 41 (1987), 103–9.

<sup>49</sup>Robert, "Théophraste," 57.

to its ongoing participation in the process of empire.

A fourth group of monuments included images of the city of Rome. Two groups, a statue of the wolf with Romulus and Remus, and a figure of a sow with piglets,<sup>50</sup> called to mind the dual legends of Rome's foundation. The statue of the wolf with the twins was, of course, a reference to the legend of Romulus and Remus and their building of the capital.<sup>51</sup> The odd subject matter of the second group derived from a prophecy, subsequently realized, that was given to Aeneas during the course of his wanderings. On two separate occasions the hero is told that he will found a new city, race, and empire at the place where he sees a white sow with thirty suckling pigs.<sup>52</sup>

The choice of the statue of the wolf with the twins can be explained on one level by the fact that the ancient festival of the Lupercalia was celebrated in the Hippodrome.<sup>53</sup> Thus, like the statues of the horses above the *carceres*, the wolf and the twins referred to events that took place in the circus. At the same time, however, the statue does more than refer to an isolated celebration. In the reenactment of the Lupercalia, Rome's foundation festival, Constantinople appropriated the old capital's history. The statue of the wolf with the twins was a permanent acknowledgment of this act of assimilation. The same is true for the sow with piglets. Like the wolf, this statue described the Constantinopolitan absorption of Rome's own history. As a result, the city was seen to partake of the destiny of Rome foretold so long ago on Latium's shores.

The provenance of these two foundation images is not known, but it would not be unreasonable to assume that, given the specific nature of their imagery, they came from Rome.<sup>54</sup> In this case their

reference to the history and traditions of that city would have been all the more forceful.

While the provenance of the wolf and the sow can only be surmised, that of the Lysippan Herakles is known to have been Rome. As noted, one of the reasons for the statue's use in the Hippodrome was Herakles' association with the games. The fact that the statue was a spoil with a well-known provenance and documented history gave a new dimension to the work. Like the wolf with the twins or the sow with piglets, this statue, steeped as it was in the history and imagery of Rome, spoke of the absorption of the old city's traditions into those of the new. In this case, however, the traditions referred to were not ancient, quasi-mythical events but documented historical proceedings that proclaimed the triumph of Roman power. What was implied, then, in the presence of the Herakles was not only the Constantinopolitan absorption of Roman tradition, but also the assimilation of the old city's power, authority, and prestige.

This idea of a Constantinopolitan succession to the traditions of Rome is borne out in the formal aspects of the circus. The seventh-century *Chronicon Paschale* notes that the Hippodrome was built in imitation of the Circus Maximus,<sup>55</sup> and, indeed, one of the very basic aims in the requisitioning of statuary must have been to make the place look like its Roman prototype. The re-use of antiquities may be considered an aspect of imitation, for by using ancient monuments as decoration, the Hippodrome acquired a patina of age and respectability that an essentially fourth-century (i.e., modern) building would have lacked.

More striking, however, were the number and disposition of the monuments. In the case of the Hippodrome, the evocation of Rome was made uniquely explicit by the presence of not one, but two obelisks. While other circuses may have had a single obelisk, only Rome was distinguished by two: the Heliopolitan Obelisk donated by Augustus and the Theban Obelisk erected under Constantius. The erection of two such monuments in Constantinople, one authentic and one imitation, was doubtless intended to play off this precedent.

The authentic obelisk, the Theodosian Obelisk,

<sup>50</sup> Nicetas, *De sig.*, 650, describes both groups.

<sup>51</sup> Livy, *Liv*-vii.

<sup>52</sup> Virgil, *Aen.*, III.388-93, VIII.36-49, 81-92.

<sup>53</sup> For a full account of ceremony in the Hippodrome, see R. Guiland, "Études sur l'Hippodrome de Byzance III & IV: Rôle de l'empereur et des diverses fonctionnaires avant et pendant les courses. Les courses de l'Hippodrome," *BSI* 26 (1965), 1-39.

<sup>54</sup> Livy, I.23.12 and Cicero, *Cat.* VIII.9, report statues of the wolf with the twins at the Lupercalia and on the Capitol. The wolf with the twins was one of the identifying images of Rome. It appeared on Roman coin issues and was sometimes used as an emblematic identification of Rome in narrative imagery. This is the case, for example, in a floor mosaic from Gerona, Spain. The mosaic shows the Circus Maximus and uses images of the wolf with the twins and Mars and Rhea Silvia to identify the setting of the action as Rome. See A. Balil, "Mosaicos circenses de Barcelona y Gerona," *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 151 (1962), 257-394 and Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 240. The

sow and piglets were also used in official imagery. See, for example, panels from the Ara Pacis Augustae: Erika Simon, *Ara Pacis Augustae* (Tübingen, 1967).

<sup>55</sup> Ol. 277.1; cited in Unger, *Quellen* (above, note 1), 296.



was erected in the Hippodrome in 390.<sup>56</sup> It was originally one of a pair from the Temple of Amon in Thebes. During the reign of Constantine, this pair was removed from the temple and transported to Alexandria. Eventually, one obelisk was sent to Rome where it was erected on the central barrier of the Circus Maximus in 357 by Constantius.<sup>57</sup> The other was taken to Constantinople where it was raised in the Hippodrome by Theodosius I. Given the example of its Roman mate, it is possible that the Theodosian monument was meant to have been installed during the reign of Constantius or even as early as that of Constantine.

The history of the second obelisk, the Built Obelisk, is more obscure.<sup>58</sup> Unlike the Theodosian monument, it is not a true monolith, but an imitation obelisk built of ashlar. Presumably it would have been installed after the erection of the second obelisk in the Circus Maximus, without which precedent a second monument, much less an imitation, would have made little sense in the Hippodrome.

It is not only in number but also in placement that the Constantinopolitan obelisks recall the precedent of Rome. In the Circus Maximus, the Heliopolitan Obelisk rises on the center of the *euryptus*, while the Theban monolith stands toward the barrier's southeast end. The Hippodrome repeats this arrangement. The Theodosian Obelisk occupies the central position of the Heliopolitan monument, the Built Obelisk the southeast placement of the Constantian monolith.

Since Augustus' erection of the Heliopolitan Obelisk in the Circus Maximus in 10 B.C., obelisks had become a characteristic feature of circus decor. They were not a feature in every circus, because, unlike other prominent monuments, such as the *metae*, or turning posts, they were not essential to the mechanics of the race. Their function was purely visual. Nonetheless, they were a popular option, because they called to mind the image of the prototypical and ideal racetrack, the Circus Maximus. Circuses with obelisks included Caesarea and Tyre in the East, the Vatican and that of Maxentius at Rome, and Arles and Vienne in the West. The obelisks from the Vatican and the Circus of Maxentius were imperial donations, and it is possible that this was also the case at Arles, Caesarea,

and Tyre. Three of these six obelisks were fourth-century dedications.<sup>59</sup> The popularity of obelisks during this period and their association with imperial rule make it possible that such monuments were a normal feature of tetrarchic circuses intended to call to mind the image of Rome and through that image, the power. As in the tetrarchic circuses that were its immediate predecessors, the formal disposition of the Hippodrome obelisks created a vision of Rome which was, essentially, an image of power.

The visual framework provided by the obelisks would have lent added pungency to the Roman images. Those statues such as the wolf, the sow, and the Herakles, which referred so eloquently to the Roman past, were suddenly seen to exist in a Rome-like ambience. What was implied in this visual metaphor was the transferral of power from the old city to the new. Constantinople was, in effect, describing itself as the New Rome.<sup>60</sup>

Non-Roman images in the circus supported this claim. A statue like the Theophanes of Mytilene made sense only in the context of an imperial city because it described a relationship between capital and province. Monuments such as the Serpent Column and the Ass and Keeper could have been seen in a similar light. Although both referred to victory and so were appropriate for the sporting ambience, the specific nature of their reference was, on another level, descriptive of the city.

Although the Serpent Column commemorated the victory of the Greeks over the Persians at Plataea, it was more than a monument to the fortuitous outcome of a single battle. At Plataea, the Greek allies repulsed the Persians for the last time, thereby securing the safety of their homeland and way of life. For them, the monument celebrated nothing less than the triumph of civilization over barbarism. In the Hippodrome this memory lingers, for by its presence the Serpent Column described Constantinople as the new protector of these ancient values.

The Ass and Keeper can also be understood as a reference to Constantinopolitan primacy. In its initial setting the monument glorified Augustus, his victory, the consolidation of his power, and the

<sup>56</sup> See Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*, 65 for history and bibliography.

<sup>57</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus, XVI.10.17 and XVII.4.

<sup>58</sup> See Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*, 65 and 71 for history and bibliography.

<sup>59</sup> For Caesarea and Tyre, see Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 484; for the Vatican, see E. Iversen, *Obelisks in Exile*, I (Copenhagen, 1968), 19–21; for the Circus of Maxentius, Arles, and Vienne, see Humphrey, *ibid.*, 285, 397–98, and 406 respectively.

<sup>60</sup> T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), 378 note 20, cites the use of this title with respect to Constantinople by Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius (*Carm.* IV.6) as early as 324/25.

initiation of the Principate. In the Hippodrome, the statue recalled these events and the ensuing evolution of Roman rule, claiming as it did so a place for Constantinople in the course of Roman history. By reason of its provenance and the moment it commemorates, the statue may have gone one step further. It is possible that it suggested an analogy between Augustus and Constantine, Nikopolis and Constantinople. Like Augustus, Constantine consolidated his power by the defeat, in 324, of his last rival, Licinius, in a naval battle near Chrysopolis. Shortly thereafter, the emperor dug his spade into the soil of Byzantium and traced the walls of his new capital on the Bosphorus. Like Nikopolis, Constantinople could be seen as a monument to victory and consolidation of one man's rule.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, like Augustus, Constantine was repudiating a system of power-sharing: his defeat of Licinius represented the final rejection of the tetrarchic system in favor of the more traditional apparatus of the Principate, which had been defined by Augustus himself.

The monuments displayed in Constantinople were designed to function on two levels. On the one hand, the circus decor reflected the athletic events that took place there. Statues of demigods, heroes, and charioteers honored the competitors and their games. On the other hand, many of these same images stood in conjunction with other monuments as part of a propagandistic civic display that expressed not only the grandeur but also the supremacy of the city intended to become the premier city of the Roman Empire.

This population of the Hippodrome with statues whose imagery was pertinent to both athletic and political concerns was determined by the circus' function. From the start, games were always more than isolated sporting events. Most were associated with the great religious and civil ceremonies that shaped a city's annual calendar. Moreover, in late Antiquity the hippodrome became increasingly important as a locus for imperial ceremony.<sup>62</sup> Constantinople was no exception. Practically all of the city's important ceremonies took place in the circus.<sup>63</sup> It was therefore logical that the Hippodrome be adorned for its role as the premier gathering place of the empire's first city.

In the context of Roman circuses, the kind of imagery seen at the Hippodrome was at once com-

monplace and unique. In the sense that it described a civic identity and that all circuses seem to have incorporated this type of imagery, the Hippodrome collection conformed to standard ideas about circus design and decoration. At Tyre, for example, statues of Herakles proliferated not only as straightforward circus imagery, but also because the hero was the city's patron god.<sup>64</sup> What is startling, therefore, in the Constantinopolitan display is not the existence of a civic imagery per se, but the claims made by this particular group of statuary and the intensity with which they are presented. No other circus in the Roman world incorporated so many images of Rome with such consistency as to proclaim itself unequivocally a New Rome. While obelisks and imperial statuary existed in other circuses, the presence of uniquely Roman monuments was unknown elsewhere. The high concentration of such well-known works as the Delphic tripods, the Ass and Keeper, and the Serpent Column was equally unprecedented. It was the unique quality of this display which, in concert with the framework of obelisks, gave Constantinople its identity as New Rome.

What was implied in this identity was contradictory. On the one hand, the name evoked the authority of the past. On the other hand, the very fact that the city was described as new invited a distinction. Constantinople may have based its claim to authority on the embrace of Rome's past, but it was, without doubt, a city built for present and future needs.

That the ornamentation of the Hippodrome was accomplished with *spolia* was probably no accident. Spoils are, by nature, Janus-like. Their value lies in their capacity to envision the future through evocation of the past. In the Hippodrome, in a clever combination of imitation and physical presence, the neat armature of obelisks so lavishly hung with antiquities captured what in the history and tradition of Rome was pertinent to the Constantinopolitan present. The imagery of victory and sport was complemented by that of history and tradition to create an environment radiant with the idea of power on the Roman model. At the same time, the construct of the Hippodrome was patently artificial. It was Rome-like, but not Roman in the sense that the particular combination of images was unknown in the old capital. Thus, even as *spolia* referred to the authority of the past, they created a

<sup>61</sup> A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1964), 84.

<sup>62</sup> Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 55 and 581.

<sup>63</sup> Guiland, "Études III & IV."

<sup>64</sup> Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 475.

new vision for the future. It was this distinction which gave the Hippodrome collection its vitality and force. The arrangement was no banal imitation, but a neatly crafted ensemble that described a vision of power in its past, present, and future

manifestations. With *spolia* the Hippodrome was ornamented for its role as the didactic centerpiece of the new capital of an ancient empire.

Ravenna